

# REVIEWS OF BOOKS

## POPULATION

**Stycos, J. Mayone and Back, Kurt W.** *The Control of Human Fertility in Jamaica*. New York, 1964. Cornell University Press. (London, 1965. Oxford University Press). Pp. xii+377. Price 60s.

THE NAMES OF Mayone Stycos and Back are well known for their studies of human life in the Carribean area. The purpose of these studies is to ascertain the prospects of a reduction in the existing high level of fertility. The bibliography to this book lists respectively seven and four publications by these authors, usually acting as a team with one another or with other demographers. Readers of the REVIEW have already been given some idea of the good quality of their work and they will also have seen accounts of the unusual mating habits and structure of family life in the West Indies.

There is no need, therefore, to give a very detailed account here of this new book about Jamaica. One need only say that it represents the (considerable) results of a painstaking analysis of data collected in the course of several years of field work in this island. The general design of the inquiry resembles that of the first-named author in Puerto Rico. First, currently-mated lower class women were interviewed so as to ascertain their family history, views on family size, and knowledge of birth control. Secondly, some experimental educational programmes were tried out on various groups of women. Finally, follow-up interviews were conducted after a lapse of time in order to ascertain whether or not, and if so how far, education in matters of birth control had had any retarding effect on fertility.

Besides their findings about the effectiveness of family planning propaganda, the authors re-examine some of the demographic hypotheses set up during other recent investigations. They confirm, for instance, that the common mating system known as "visiting relations" reduces fertility in comparison with marriages (whether Church or "common-law"). This, they show, is

not only because visiting relations are unstable, thus reducing the frequency of intercourse, but also because the unmarried are more interested in small family size and in birth control. They contest, however, the view of G. W. Roberts that common-law unions tend to be stable and to lead towards marriage in the end. Common-law unions, they find, have a fertility intermediate between that of visiting relations and that of marriage; and marriage when it occurs is often with someone new who is found to be more compatible.

The trouble with these findings is that they suggest that economic development, which through increased wealth is likely to lead to greater frequency of marriage, will in all probability tend to raise fertility rather than reduce it. Nevertheless, there seems to be good ground for an educational programme, as the survey shows that Jamaican women aspire towards a medium family size and most of them are not inherently opposed to birth control. The book devotes some attention to general public opinion, and there is an appendix on "Press Reaction" to the research programme.

While, however, the population at large were not averse to the educational programme, those who attended the courses, or were otherwise indoctrinated, were not very responsive to it in practice; only about 20 per cent of rural and 40 per cent of urban women actually practised contraception during the first few months following the programme. The authors did find, however, that repeated applications of the propaganda, or a combination of several methods of approach, such as pamphlets, meetings and interviews, were more effective than single applications or the use of one method alone. They draw several interesting conclusions from their study about the practicality of introducing birth control on a wide front, and divide the population into three groups: those ready to practice it with only slight encouragement; those capable of being persuaded to do so after a major effort; and those inaccessible to the types of educational approach used in

the study. The last of these groups accounts for only one-quarter of the whole.

When reading such a book as this, it is easy to enter wholeheartedly into the spirit of the inquiry, and to follow the account and the argument from page to page much as one might read a detective novel uncritically for the sweep of the narrative and the pursuit of the clues. Detective novels too often lose the attention of their reader as the improbabilities mount and his critical faculties reassert themselves. This book holds the attention throughout. Its approach seems sound, and its conclusions appear to be both justified and—taken along with the findings of other surveys in the same geographical area—of some value to Governmental and private agencies vitally interested in arresting excessive growth of population in the Caribbean.

P. R. C.

**Szabady, Egon** (Editor). *Studies on Fertility and Social Mobility*. Proceedings of the International Demographic Congress Symposium, Budapest, 20–30th, November, 1962. Budapest, 1964. Akadémiai Kiadó. Pp. 331. Price not stated.

THE PAPERS OF this conference were grouped into six classes:

Family size and fertility (five papers);

Forecasts and international comparability of fertility (four papers);

Social re-stratification and its demographic effects (five papers);

Demographic differences between village and town (seven papers);

Structural changes caused by migration (four papers);

Socio-occupational connexions of marriage and divorce (four papers).

All the papers are reprinted in English in the *Proceedings*, and in addition there is a full record of the discussions, which is worth reading.

Nearly all the forty participants came from the communist states of Eastern Europe, and this regional interest is apparent in the papers—for instance “differentials” are measured between groups of a somewhat different character from what one would find in the West. Nevertheless, many of the features one has in the past associated with Russia and the area of its influence

are absent: dialectic is here largely replaced by data; there are hardly any strictures on capitalism and few even on Malthus; and the work of demographers all over the world is recognised and given due credit.

One of the most recent demographic developments in any part of the world in recent years has been the very sharp fall in the birth rate in Eastern Europe, and it might have been expected that, in a discussion devoted to fertility held in 1962 in this area, some light might have been thrown on this development. In fact, although the change is recorded in some of the figures quoted, little is said about it. Thus in a paper on the subject of the impact of new Socialism on the birth and death rates of the Roumanian people, the decline in the birth rate from 24.2 per thousand in 1956 to 17.5 per thousand in 1961 is referred to—quite dispassionately, and without any mention of “decadence”—in terms of economic development, a better standard of life and the movement from villages to towns. There is a very brief reference to the abolition of restrictions concerning induced abortions, but otherwise birth control is not mentioned. From a scientific point of view, the omission of any reference to the methods of control is a serious weakness; if there have been abortions, the effect on the mothers' health ought to have been discussed. From a political viewpoint, however, the omission is probably very tactful.

In Yugoslavia the fall in the birth rate has also been marked in recent years, but as this represents a continuation of the forty-year trend there is, perhaps, less cause to single it out. At any rate, it is not discussed in a paper in which there was ample opportunity to do so: the author merely states that the various changes that have occurred “for the most part can be regarded as positive”.

These two papers appeared in the section entitled “Social Re-stratification and its Demographic Effects”, where they appear somewhat out of place. The remaining three contributions in this section are more orthodox in their references to social mobility and show something of the effects of the economic and political development of recent years. Dr. Miltényi, of Hungary, writes on the impact of heterogeneous marriages on birth control, but speaks only of